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PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHJA #8929/01 1990110
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 180110Z JUL 06
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7350
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 9731
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 0945
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNFB/DIR FBI WASHDC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 008929

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR EAP/IET AND S/CT
DOJ FOR CTS THORNTON, AAG SWARTZ
FBI FOR ETTIU/SSA ROTH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/16/2016

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [KISL](#) [ASEC](#) [AS](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: BA'ASYIR ENJOYING HIGHER PROFILE AFTER RELEASE

REF: A. JAKARTA 7555 (JEMMAH ISLAMIYAH EMIR ABU BAKAR
BA'ASYIR RELEASED)
[1](#)B. JAKARTA 7398 (WHAT'S NEXT FOR ABB JI?)
[1](#)C. JAKARTA 05040 (PROSECUTORS UNFAZED BY TESTIMONY)
[1](#)D. JAKARTA 07345 (YUDHOYONO ORDERS CRACKDOWN)

Classified By: Political Officer Adam West for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Since his release from Cipinang prison on June 14, 2006 (ref A), Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) spiritual leader and Indonesia Mujihadin Council (MMI) Amir Abu Bakar Ba'asyir has used the public spotlight to promote jihad in the Middle East and Shari'a law in Indonesia in an attempt to broaden his appeal as an Islamic leader (ref B). A barrage of post-release speeches, books, and tapes has generated significant interest from the media and from at least three Islamist political parties. The GOI has not responded to Ba'asyir publicly or otherwise, nor has it taken a clear stance on issues raised by Ba'asyir's designation as a terrorist under UNSCR 1267, including to what extent his activities will be monitored by police. Ba'asyir's request for Judicial Review remains pending (ref C). End Summary

Speaking out on Shari'a and Terror

[1](#)2. (SBU) After 26 months in prison, Ba'asyir has spoken out in support of jihad against Israel and implementing Shari'a law in Indonesia, possibly in an attempt to burnish his public credentials and more widely establish himself as an Islamic leader. Within days of his release, Ba'asyir made a speech to several thousand members of the Indonesia Mujihadin Council (MMI), which he still heads. He stressed the need for Shari'a law in Indonesia, and stated the recent earthquake in central Java was the result of "damaged morals" among Indonesians. As a guest speaker at a gathering of the conservative Islamic and pro- Shari'a Crescent Star Party (PBB) a few days later, he urged Muslims to travel to Palestine to wage Jihad against Israel, a salient theme given the heavy attention that recent events there have received in the Indonesian press.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Ba'asyir has wasted no time promoting his views in other media as well. His release from prison was accompanied by the release of two new books and two cassette tapes. The tapes are entitled "Knowing the Nature of the Munafik"(unbeliever posing as a Muslim) and "Knowing the

Nature of the Infidel". The hardcover book "I Was Slandered" gives Ba'asyir's version of the events leading up to his arrest and his time in prison, and includes an introduction by Hussein Umar, General Secretary of the Indonesian Council for Islamic Propagation (DDII). "Notes from Prison on the Application and Establishment of True Islam" appears to be more a statement of Ba'asyir's religious thought. The cover features a close-up of Ba'asyir, while in the background we see the burning twin towers and an American flag being set afire.

¶4. (SBU) Ba'asyir's public statements on terrorism constitute a tangled web of fabrications and contradictions. He states that "jihad with weapons" is not appropriate for Indonesia, but still refers to the perpetrators of the 2002 Bali bombings as "heroes" who merely "erred in their opinions about jihad". In a July 7 interview with Al-Jazeera, Ba'asyir explained a convoluted theory of the 2002 attacks in which the small bombs built by these errant Jihadists were "attached to larger explosive charges" under an "arrangement...made by the CIA", resulting in an explosion that was "doubled in strength". This theory forms the basis for his call for clemency for the three men sentenced to death for their role in those attacks, as it was "the American bomb", according to Ba'asyir, which resulted in the 202 deaths. Ba'asyir's request for Judicial Review of his own conviction is still pending before the Supreme Court.

Fairly good press

¶5. (SBU) Ba'asyir's activities have drawn significant

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attention in the mainstream press since his release, much of it positive, with coverage routinely including pictures that show a smiling Ba'asyir waving to large crowds. The Indonesian press refuses to describe Ba'asyir as a member of JI despite the court's finding to the contrary, referring to him only as MMI Amir and head of the Al-Mukmin Pesantren in Ngruki, Central Java. An editorial in the Islamist-leaning Republika called him the "scapegoat" of the West, and even the mainstream Kompas described his release as "a homecoming long delayed". Allegations of foreign meddling in the case are routinely cited in the media, some of them referencing past comments by Indonesian terror expert Sidney Jones that Ba'asyir was convicted on flimsy evidence. Others have raised Australian Prime Minister Howard's strong response to Ba'asyir's release, which has been roundly condemned in the Indonesian press.

Courted by Islamist parties

¶6. (SBU) Ba'asyir's popularity has received the attention of conservative Islamist political parties seeking to capitalize on his current star power. Aside from his speech at the PBB (see above), Ba'asyir received a public invitation from Hamzah Haz, former Vice President and now leader of the conservative Islamic United Development Party (PPP), to become a member, and he has been invited to speak to the National Mandate Party (PAN) as well. While Ba'asyir has repeatedly stated that he is not a member of any party and is in fact opposed to electoral democracy in principle, their interest in him demonstrates that conservative Islamic parties view him as a public relations asset at the very least, and that they may be willing to move closer to Ba'asyir's more radical MMI organization.

GOI reaction limited

¶7. (C) Despite recent GOI attempts to promote more forcefully Pancasila as an ideological alternative to extremism (ref D), the GOI has neither responded publicly to Ba'asyir's rhetoric

nor visibly tried to discourage other Islamist leaders from embracing him. Contacts at the Counterterrorism desk in the Coordinating Ministry for Security state that no such response is being planned. The GOI response to Ba'asyir's designation as a terrorist under UNSCR 1267 similarly lacks coordination. While the Department of Foreign Relations stated that Ba'asyir's assets would be frozen in accordance with UN regulations, Vice President Jusuf Kalla stated publicly that this could not be done. President Yudhoyono has remained above the fray in public, noting only that Ba'asyir's release is in no way indicative of Indonesia's ongoing commitment to eradicating terrorism.

18. (C) The issue of to what extent Ba'asyir will be monitored by police also remains unclear (see ref B). The GOI has been less ambiguous regarding the ban on foreign travel that UNSCR 1267 requires, with officials stating firmly that it will be enforced. However, we have heard a rumor that Ba'asyir might be planning a pilgrimage to Mecca later this year. If true, this would constitute a severe test to GOI's commitment to the travel ban, as there could be considerable pressure not to inhibit a prominent figure from participating in an event of such profound religious significance.

PASCOE